

CRAIG HEINE

Good morning Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. My name is Craig Heine and I am a nurse manager employed with Easter Seals/Goodwill in Great Falls.

I see first-hand, the benefits of Medicaid home and community based service dollars as they make impacts on the lives of the people we serve in many Medicaid funded programs. I oversee a variety of programs, but the areas that I see some of the most effective use of our Medicaid dollars is in the direct care provided to our recipients. Much of this care is for activities many of us take for granted. Many of these activities are as simple as having a meal prepared, a reminder in person, or on the phone, to take medications, or assistance getting ready for the day, or getting ready for bed.

These may seem like very simple activities, and they are, but they are critical in many recipient's abilities to maintain their independence in their homes. Many recipients, without these basic supports, would need a higher level of care, such as an assisted living facility, or a nursing home. With these clients already being Medicaid recipients, it becomes imperative to deliver the best care possible at the lowest cost, and the best place to do that is in each individual's home.

As you have heard from Laurie Miller, the ability to provide services at home is critical to both independence and quality of life for the individual she shared about, and that can be translated to many other clients.

The need to make adjustments to the budget is a large issue and you have many things to consider. Given the lack of expansion of the personal assistance services budget, and the reductions in state plan dollars in the last year, I urge you to not make cuts in the home and community based services, and personal assistance services budgets. The dollars spent here are directly attributable to maintenance of individual's independence in the lowest cost place to provide those services, and the place that all of us would want to have those services provided for us if we were a Medicaid recipient.

Thank you.